



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 3, 2021

Ms. Amber K. King
General Counsel
Lake Travis Independent School District
3322 Ranch Road 620 South
Austin, Texas 78738

OR2021-30676

Dear Ms. King:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 914362 (LTISD Req. No. 2021-114).

The Lake Travis Independent School District (the "district") received a request for three categories of information pertaining to a specified request for proposals. Although the district takes no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, the district states release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Southeast Service Corporation d/b/a SSC Service Solutions ("SSC"). Accordingly, the district states, and provides documentation showing, it notified each third party of the request for information and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We have received comments from SSC. We have reviewed the submitted information and the submitted arguments.

Section 552.110(c) of the Government Code states:

(c) Except as provided by Section 552.0222, commercial or financial information for which it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence that disclosure would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained is [excepted from required disclosure].

Gov't Code § 552.110(c). Additionally, we note section 552.0222(b) lists certain types of information to which section 552.110 does not apply. *See id.* § 552.0222(b). SSC argues some of its information consists of commercial or financial information subject to section 552.110(c). Upon review, we find SSC has demonstrated portions of the information at issue constitute commercial or financial information, the release of which would cause substantial competitive harm. Accordingly, the district must withhold the information we have indicated under section 552.110(c) of the Government Code; however, to the extent the customer information is made available to the public by SSC, including but not limited to on its website or social media accounts, it may not be withheld under 552.110. We find some of the remaining information at issue is subject to section 552.0222(b) and may not be withheld on the basis of section 552.110(c). Additionally, we find SSC has failed to provide specific factual evidence demonstrating any portion of the rest of the remaining information at issue constitutes commercial or financial information, the release of which would result in substantial competitive harm. Therefore, the district may not withhold any of the remaining information at issue under section 552.110(c) of the Government Code.

Section 552.110(b) of the Government Code states, “[e]xcept as provided by [s]ection 552.0222, information is [excepted from required disclosure] if it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence that the information is a trade secret.” *See id.* § 552.110(b). Section 552.110(a) defines a trade secret as all forms and types of information if:

- (1) the owner of the trade secret has taken reasonable measures under the circumstances to keep the information secret; and
- (2) the information derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable through proper means by, another person who can obtain economic value from the disclosure or use of the information.

Id. § 552.110(a). As previously noted, section 552.0222(b) lists certain types of information to which section 552.110 does not apply. *See id.* § 552.0222(b). SSC argues some of its information consists of trade secrets subject to section 552.110(b). Upon review, however, we find some of the information at issue is subject to section 552.0222(b) and may not be withheld on the basis of section 552.110(b). Additionally, we find SSC has failed to provide specific factual evidence demonstrating any portion of the rest of the remaining information at issue is a trade secret. Therefore, the district may not withhold any of the remaining information at issue under section 552.110(b) of the Government Code.

Section 552.1101 of the Government Code provides, in relevant part:

- (a) Except as provided by Section 552.0222, information submitted to a governmental body by a vendor, contractor, potential vendor, or potential contractor in response to a request for a bid, proposal, or qualification is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if the vendor, contractor, potential vendor, or potential contractor that the information relates to demonstrates based on specific factual evidence that disclosure of the information would:

(1) reveal an individual approach to:

(A) work;

(B) organizational structure;

(C) staffing;

(D) internal operations;

(E) processes; or

(F) discounts, pricing methodology, pricing per kilowatt hour, cost data, or other pricing information that will be used in future solicitation or bid documents; and

(2) give advantage to a competitor.

(b) The exception to disclosure provided by Subsection (a) does not apply to:

(1) information in a voucher or contract relating to the receipt or expenditure of public funds by a governmental body; or

(2) communications and other information sent between a governmental body and a vendor or contractor related to the performance of a final contract with the governmental body or work performed on behalf of the governmental body.

Id. § 552.1101(a), (b). Additionally, we note section 552.0222(b) lists certain types of information to which section 552.1101(a) does not apply. *See id.* § 552.0222(b). SSC asserts disclosure of some of its information would reveal an individual approach to work, internal operations, processes, and pricing information and give advantage to a competitor. Upon review, however, we find some of the remaining information at issue is subject to section 552.1101(b) and may not be withheld on the basis of section 552.1101(a). *See id.* § 552.1101(b) (listing certain types of information not excepted under section 552.1101). Additionally, we find SSC has failed to provide specific factual evidence demonstrating any portion of the rest of the remaining information at issue is subject to section 552.1101(a). Therefore, the district may not withhold any of the remaining information at issue under section 552.1101(a) of the Government Code.

We note the remaining documents include information that is subject to section 552.136 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.136 of the Government Code provides,

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

“[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.” Gov’t Code § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). This office has determined insurance policy numbers are access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. Open Records Decision No. 684 at 9 (2009). Accordingly, the district must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

We note some of the materials at issue may be protected by copyright. A custodian of public records must comply with the copyright law and is not required to furnish copies of records that are copyrighted. Open Records Decision No. 180 at 3 (1977). A governmental body must allow inspection of copyrighted materials unless an exception applies to the information. *Id.*; *see* Open Records Decision No. 109 (1975). If a member of the public wishes to make copies of copyrighted materials, the person must do so unassisted by the governmental body. In making copies, the member of the public assumes the duty of compliance with the copyright law and the risk of a copyright infringement suit.

In summary, the district must withhold the information we have indicated under section 552.110(c) of the Government Code; however, to the extent the customer information is made available to the public by SSC, including but not limited to on its website or social media accounts, it may not be withheld under 552.110. The district must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The district must release the remaining information; however, any information that is subject to copyright may be released only in accordance with copyright law.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

Gerald A. Arismendez
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

GAA/jm

Ref: ID# 914362

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Third Party
(w/o enclosures)